



Papalo

DID YOU KNOW?

In Mexico, papalo branches are kept in water on café tables, so diners can tear up fresh leaves and add them to beans or tortillas.



Because cooking destroys the flavor, papalo leaves are only used fresh or added to meals at the last moment.

ORIGINS

Papalo is native to Mexico, Central and South America, growing as far north as Texas. Papalo is being introduced to gardeners in the U.S. as "a great new herb from Mexico."



In places where temperatures are always warm, papalo grows year-round for many years. But because papalo cannot cope with frost, in the U.S., you may have to grow the plant from seed every year.

CLASSIFYING PAPALO

Papalo is a member of the Asteraceae, or Compositae, family. The composites make up the largest family of flowering plants, with about 20,000 species, including sunflowers and daisies.

FAMILY
Asteraceae
(or Compositae)

sunflower

black-eyed
susan



The flower head of a plant in this family is commonly mistaken for a single flower, but it really is many flowers grouped together.

GENUS
Porophyllum
In Latin, this means
"leaves with pores."



Pores are tiny openings. You can see the pores on papalo leaves without a microscope. Oil comes out of the pores, which gives papalo leaves a strong scent and flavor.

SPECIES

ruderae means
"growing in rubble
or waste places."



Papalo grows well on dry slopes, ravines, and roadsides. It has even been known to grow on nearly bare rock.

THE PAPALO PLANT

Papalo has egg-shaped leaves, which have a lovely, spicy, sharp scent and flavor.

The flower looks like an unopened marigold bloom, and then it opens into a ball that looks like a dandelion flower.



In the U.S., the plant grows up to 1 meter tall during one growing season. In warmer climates, the plant can grow over 2 meters high.

An illustration of a person with dark hair tied back, wearing a red shirt and blue pants, kneeling on the ground. They are using a small white container to plant a green papalo seedling into a brown pot. The background is a dark blue gradient.

You can use papalo instead of cilantro in cooking. Papalo has the advantage that it does not go to seed in the early summer, like cilantro does.

USES

Papalo leaves are used to flavor soups and stews, grilled meats, beans, salsa, and salads. The leaves also are used as a medicinal herb for many ailments, such as high blood pressure, upset stomach, and infections.

An illustration of a blue bowl filled with a red soup. A spoon is placed next to the bowl. A small white salt shaker with the word 'SALT' on it is also visible. A few green papalo leaves are scattered around the bowl.

Pick papalo leaves when young for a milder flavor. The flavor gets stronger the older the leaves are.